

# Wycombe standard was set too high

THE Berks and Bucks Senior Cup, finalists in the Premier Midweek Floodlight League and fourth place in the Isthmian League. Many clubs would envy such a successful season and yet by their own high standards, 1972/73 has been tinged with disappointment for Wycombe Wanderers.

Anything other than winning the Isthmian League championship for the third year running had to be a let down for the club, players and supporters. Without doubt, Wanderers are victims of their own standards.

Their record in recent years is remarkable for its consistency. In 69/70 they finished fourth, the following year runners up and for the past two seasons, they won the title.

Only a supreme optimist would have thought that sort of success could last.

At first, it seemed the Blues were set for that championship hat-trick. Maximum points from their first six matches and top of the table again, as they had been for most of the previous season. Then, on a shocking pitch at Walthamstow Avenue, things began to go sour on them.

They lost the next game at home to Hendon (a real classic), dropped a home point against Enfield at Loakes Park and then drew 1-1 at St. Albans.

It was the start of a long spell of disappointing results and disappointing football that lasted until March this year. Perhaps the worst set back was their Amateur Cup first round exit against Cheshunt. With home advantage Wycombe looked set for an easy passage to round two. And yet from the start of the game, fate seemed to go against them. John Delaney's mistake gave Cheshunt a goal and then he was carried off injured with the match only a few minutes old.

After defeats by Bishop's Stortford and Ilford and the fourth qualifying round F.A. Cup reverse by Walton and

Hersham, it was obvious Wanderers were not the threat of the past.

So where did it go wrong?

For a start there was no Ted Powell and Mick Mellows, both of whom left for new pastures. Powell's departure was offset by the arrival of Gerry Olson, the towering Maidenhead number five. Alongside Delaney, I for

Time and again, Wycombe churned out enough chances to win matches 5-0 and yet finished on the losing side by the odd goal. Their one goal defeats became almost expected.

Injuries too affected Wycombe to a far greater extent than previous years. Coupled with the inconsistency of some couldn't shoulder Searle's

Cup, there were mixed fortunes. Spartan League minnows Chalfont St. Peter were disposed of to the tune of 9-0 and then Wycombe drew by the skin of their teeth against another Spartan club Bracknell. Winning the replay 1-0, they faced Slough Town, who had beaten them for competition. The 8-0 hammering the past two years in the final.

There was also two great games in the late stages. The 1-1 draw at Tooting saw some of the best football played all season while in the final encounter, they beat a Bournemouth side containing no less than nine first team regulars, 2-1.

After that game, Bournemouth manager John Bond was so impressed he signed on one of the Wycombe players — John Delaney.

Without doubt, he will be hard to replace next term — Wycombe's last as amateurs.

The plans for a new division come into effect with the top Athenian clubs forming a second division. Plans for a league cup competition have yet to be finalised and things won't really start moving until the end of the season when a two up-two down promotion and relegation system will operate.

Two permit players will be allowed per club next term, too, and this ties in with the F.A. decision to call all amateurs "players". The most immediate effect of the move, which comes into operation in 1975, will be the introduction of former professional players into clubs like Wycombe.

On the whole the Isthmian League looks, at last, to be catching up with the times. What is distressing is the drop in attendances. At the leagues gala day at Hendon recently, a meagre 2,000 turned up to see the host club receive a new trophy for winning the league title.

In common with football league clubs, attendances have dropped dramatically. Wycombe have suffered too and their balance sheet will no doubt testify. Big changes are needed here if small clubs are to survive financially.

There seems no reason why Wycombe should not have another successful season next year. Like everyone else, they will have their sights set on the last ever amateur Cup. For their record in recent years, a Wembley victory would be a fitting finale.

## End of season review by STUART EARP

one, thought they would be unbeatable. But it never really came off as the players were too similar. In the end Olson returned to his old club.

The signing of Tony Amos was heralded as a tonic for Wycombe's early poor form. Far too much was expected from the player, however, and he too left for a former club, Hayes. Keith Jameson, Mick Cooper and Barry Davies all came and went without making lasting impressions.

One of the big blows to Wycombe, was Keith Searle's move to Hendon. When he left, the whole attack lost cohesion and teamwork. Amos just responsibility and the finishing suffered as a result.

players, manager Brian Lee was unable to field the same side for more than two or three weeks.

This pattern continued until a combination of events lifted the club no end. Dave Bullock established himself as the regular number four, Keith Searle returned to the attack and a new face emerged onto the scene in Kenny Swain.

While the league performances were inconsistent, however, Wanderers turned their attentions to other matters. They were in a class of their own in the Premier Midweek Floodlight League, scoring more goals than any other team in the handed out to Banbury United was football at its best.

In the Berks and Bucks Senior

By the time the teams met, Wanderers had improved considerably, and they deservedly took the trophy with a 1-0 triumph at Chesham.

The County Cup success was a fitting climax to Wanderers' year.

When Wycombe were in song, they were brilliant. Some of their moves can only be described as unstoppable. It was the sort of flowing, direct and above all speed football that gave true entertainment to the crowds.

Looking back there were some other memorable performances. The 8-0 P.M.F.L. win at Oxford City, the 1-0 revenge win over Walton, a 5-1 triumph at Bishop's Stortford. All these games spring to mind.

## THOSE WHO LEFT

FIVE players came and went at Wycombe last term — Barry Davies, Tony Amos, Gerry Olson, Keith Jameson and Mick Cooper. Kevin O'Brien, the deputy goalkeeper for several seasons, also left.

Kevin, always the understudy for John Maskell, was a more than useful stand-in. Left the club when Peter Spittle signed from Maidenhead.

Barry Davies came from Leatherhead and seemed to be fitting in well. He had a tendency to slow down attacks and when dropped by the

manager for this reason decided to return to his former club, who put the double over Wycombe in the league.

Tony Amos came from Slough as their top scorer. Too much was expected of this player yet on the other hand he missed a whole host of scoring chances. Scored several fine goals, notably against St. Albans and Dulwich Hamlet.

A member of the Hendon Cup winning squad in 71/72, Keith Jameson never really fitted in at Loakes Park. His distribution

was generally poor and he too eventually left for Hayes.

Mick Cooper, an international full back, was troubled with injuries for much of his stay with Wycombe. Weak in the air, he was dangerous on the overlap but was another player who never really settled in with the club.

The signing of Gerry Olson from Maidenhead looked a good move but when partnered with Delaney, both players lost their edge. Strong in the air, Olson returned to the 'Magpies' later in the season.